

Community-based Restoration Matching Grants Program

TNC Global Marine Team & NOAA Restoration Center

Request for Proposals – February 2011

TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are pleased to request proposals for their restoration matching grants program. This program is part of a national cooperative agreement between TNC's Global Marine Team and the Community-based Restoration Program of the NOAA Restoration Center.

The objectives of TNC and NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) are to bring together interested groups, public, private, tribal and non-profit organizations to implement habitat restoration projects to benefit NOAA trust resources (anadromous, estuarine, and marine species and their habitats). This innovative program recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at a community level. (For more information visit: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/programs/crp.html> and <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/marine/strategies/community.html>).

Focus areas: NOAA and TNC are looking to support community-based restoration of a diversity of habitat types and no habitats are excluded. We will consider any innovative restoration project nationwide that supports NOAA trust resources, and particularly those projects that have a multi-species benefit or emphasize Ecosystem-Based Management. A focal area of particular interest, though not exclusive or limiting, is native shellfish (bivalve) restoration projects.

Projects throughout all USA states and territories are eligible to compete for these grants. Preference will be given to projects at priority sites identified through Marine Ecoregional Assessments, and other TNC priority setting approaches at the state and territory level (contact TNC state or territory staff listed in Appendix II or NOAA/TNC Partnership Coordinator, Boze Hancock, see below).

Match Requirements: The NOAA-TNC national partnership provides seed money to individual projects that leverage funds and other contributions from the public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration that benefits living marine resources.

Non-federal match is required at the rate of 1:1. The 1:1 match can come from a variety of (non-federal) public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services from project partners. Approved projects may use any unrecovered indirect costs as match (see budget section below). Note however that neither Federal funds nor Federal

funds passed through state agencies are eligible to be used as matching funds. Mitigation funds or other funds mandated by a court action are also not eligible as match.

Global Marine Team Technical Support: As part of TNC's increased focus on restoration, The Global Marine Team will work with project sites and regional programs to leverage the impact of individual restoration projects through information exchange and coordination across projects. We can offer site and regional practitioners our expertise to assist with developing (i) projects aimed at shellfish restoration and the restoration of nursery habitats nationwide, (ii) linking projects towards achieving regional restoration success, and (iii) improving the measurement and monitoring of ecosystem services.

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) Technical Support: Through NOAA's Restoration Center, CRP staff provide technical support to assist project proponents in the development and implementation of sound coastal restoration projects. Located strategically throughout the country (see Appendix 1), CRP field staff are available, as needed, to provide site-specific guidance on activities including project design and engineering, environmental compliance, and science-based project monitoring. In addition, CRP field staff work to enhance community engagement and collaboration among local entities to increase restoration success at the local and regional level and coordinate and gain public recognition for restoration efforts.

Administrative Requirements: Awards are expected to be announced by June 2011. Anticipated awards are contingent on notification of federal funding to The Nature Conservancy. Upon notification of an award, projects will be assigned a TNC Global Marine Team budget center number to use for project expenses, and will also be informed as to required financial and programmatic reporting requirements. This information will assist TNC in meeting Federal guidelines for reporting expenses and project status on a semi-annual basis.

Proposal Requirements and Submission: Specifications for TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants are detailed in the following pages. Proposals are due by **April 1, 2011**. Submission by e-mail is preferred. Submission by hard copy will be accepted if it is received by the close of business on the due date. If you submit a hard copy, please also submit an electronic copy on CD, to:

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For questions about the grants program or proposals please contact Boze Hancock, TNC-NOAA National Partnership Coordinator at 401-874-6121 (phone), or bhancock@tnc.org (email), or your local NOAA RC staff (Appendix 1).

If proposals are greater than 5MB please contact Boze Hancock regarding safe receipt of large email files.

COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION GRANTS 2011

Proposal Requirements

NOAA-TNC Partnership

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC's) mission is to protect representative biodiversity and the lands and waters that native plants and animals need to survive. Our greatest strength lies in our effectiveness at conserving biodiversity at the local level. Our "conservation process" consists of four fundamental components: setting *priorities* through ecoregional planning; developing *strategies* to abate threats at both single and multiple conservation areas; taking direct conservation *action*; and measuring conservation *success* (*Conservation by Design* 2000).

To achieve its global mission, TNC has increasingly focused its efforts on marine and estuarine conservation. Marine and estuarine conservation is an essential component of conserving global biodiversity and is growing rapidly with support and leadership from the Global Marine Team. *Conservation by Design* also requires us to explicitly consider and sustain the ecological linkages among terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems.

TNC's conservation process has brought heightened awareness of coastal and marine ecosystems and the many species that require these habitats during part of their lives. This process has also highlighted the fact that many coastal and marine sites require restoration (see Appendix IV) to function properly. As a result, TNC's Global Marine Team has been vigorously promoting aquatic conservation practices, including habitat restoration under the TNC/NOAA partnership.

Grants

This year, typical grants will be in the range of \$25,000-\$85,000. This will be a competitive process. The merits of each proposal will be weighed based on how closely the project aligns with the national partnership's evaluation criteria (see below).

TNC and NOAA reserve the right to select a limited number of projects that have demonstrated prior success with the proposed restoration technique and invite them to prepare scaled proposals for up to \$250,000 to achieve larger restoration outcomes. Applicants are welcome to indicate if they consider that their proposal falls within this category and if higher levels of matching funds may be available. Reference of prior success and a brief (maximum 1 page) statement of the rationale for, and benefit of, scaling up for larger restoration outcomes can be included as an appendix to the proposal.

Elements of Successful Project Proposals

Applicants should strive to meet as many of the following elements as possible (see also selection criteria below):

- Project is fully aligned with *Conservation by Design*
<http://nature.org/aboutus/howwework/cbd/> (and follow to the section titled 'Go Deeper')
This means:
 - It is either part of a TNC priority conservation area identified in an Ecoregional Assessment or is identified as significant by alternative TNC conservation priority assessments, as indicated by TNC state or territory chapters (See appendix II). The Marine Ecoregional Assessment and TNC chapter and staff providing this advice should be noted in the proposal. Note that these analyses are not available in all U.S. and territorial geographies and therefore this can only

be done where the information is available. Contact your state or territorial chapter of TNC (Appendix II) and / or Boze Hancock if you have questions regarding currently available analyses.

- It is included as part of a TNC conservation action plan that identifies restoration as a primary strategy for achieving conservation success. Again this planning may not have been completed in all U.S. and territorial geographies and TNC staff should be consulted.
 - It should identify, or be prepared to address, short and long-term measures of success (see Monitoring below).
- Project implementation will result in tangible and measurable restoration of living marine resources.
 - Project has clear restoration objectives, with measurable outcomes supported by a well-crafted monitoring plan that meets NOAA's minimum monitoring requirements (see Monitoring below);
 - Project involves significant community engagement and support that is tied to the restoration activities. This should be done to ensure the community is aware of restoration activities, feels ownership in specific projects and can voice any concerns there may be, and to promote community stewardship.
 - Project concept involves substantial interaction with the NOAA Restoration Center regional representative throughout its development; a list of the NOAA local contacts is provided in Appendix 1.
 - Project involves partners.
 - Project demonstrates a reasonable assurance that the appropriate permits can be obtained in a timely manner and the proposal includes a list of all necessary federal, state, tribal and local permits required to complete the project.
 - Project demonstrates a reasonable assurance that there is ongoing protection for the restoration investment (e.g., fishery closures, conservation easements, or other habitat protection).
 - Project must provide a minimum 1:1 non-federal match. Match above the required 1:1 level increases the competitiveness of proposed projects.
 - Budget justification with sufficient detail to evaluate project cost effectiveness.

Proposal Contents

If the project qualifies, a proposal should be submitted to Boze Hancock in TNC's Global Marine Team. ***Proposals should be no longer than five pages (not including attachments). You are also strongly encouraged to consult with a member of NOAA Restoration Center regional staff (see appendix 1), State or Territory TNC staff (see appendix II), and Boze Hancock at TNC, early-on in the proposal preparation process.***

Recommended format and minimum information to be provided in a project proposal includes:

BASIC APPLICATION INFORMATION

- Project Name
- Contact Person (address, phone, fax, email)
- Congressional District(s) and Representative(s)
- Regional NOAA Contact Staff Person
- Project abstract. 1 paragraph (3 to 5 sentence) Project Abstract succinctly outlining major project goals and activities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Project location (include project zip code, and lat-long if possible). Relevant Maps should be included as appendices with site location(s) specifically indicated. Photos may also be included.
- Description of the conservation status of the site in a Marine Ecoregional Assessment or other conservation assessment, and the TNC staff consulted.
- Land Ownership (public or private).
- Anticipated Benefits to Species and Habitat(s), including threatened and endangered species.
- A list of federal, state, tribal and local permits (e.g. see Permit Requirements and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements sections below).
- Partners Involved (include partner contributions, if applicable, even if not used as match). Letters of partner support and pledges of match may be added to the appendix.
- Whether the project has previously demonstrated success with the restoration technique and is in a position to be scaled up for increased restoration outcomes (a description may be included as an appendix, see 'Grants' above).

WORK PLAN

- Start and End Date. Two year projects are preferred, including implementation of the restoration work and post-restoration monitoring.
- Restoration Methodology and Design Considerations.
- Timeline for Anticipated Actions (e.g., design and permitting phase, pre-restoration monitoring, implementation, post-restoration monitoring).
- Identification of the mechanism that will be used to ensure that necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of Federal funds.
- Identification of Goals and Description of Long-Term Measures of Success.
- Identification of Measurable Objectives / Project-specific Benchmarks for Measuring Short-Term Success (see Monitoring below).
- Community Engagement (may include: hands-on training and restoration activities undertaken by volunteers; sponsorship from local entities, either through in-kind goods and services or cash contributions; public education and outreach; and/or support from state and local governments).
- A description of the anticipated outreach for the project (e.g., press releases, presentations, papers, publications, workshops and trainings, if applicable).

PROJECTED BUDGET AND NARRATIVE (included as Appendix 1 to the proposal, see Appendix III below for instructions)

- Completed *Projected Budget Template*.
- Grant Amount requested.
- Match Amount being provided (non-federal is required).
- Identify source(s) of Match and indicate whether match is confirmed or pending.

- Justification For Fund Use (as listed in projected budget) and a budget narrative.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Technical merit, project feasibility and a relevant monitoring plan;
- Extent to which project benefits living marine resources;
- Extent to which the project will persist over the long-term, including any long-term maintenance plan for ensuring long-term sustainability of the site;
- Community involvement, education, and stewardship;
- Whether NEPA, ESA, or other regulatory compliance issues may reasonably be raised, and how likely they are to be expeditiously resolved to allow project implementation to begin as planned;
- Budget justification, project cost-effectiveness and availability of match;
- Degree of support from, and involvement with, the regional NOAA contact person.
- The extent of present and future involvement of TNC staff at these sites.

Preference will be given to projects containing:

- Sites identified as conservation priorities in Marine Ecoregional Assessments or significance in alternative TNC conservation priority assessment;
- Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as identified by NOAA Fisheries, and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (see: http://sharpfin.nmfs.noaa.gov/website/EFH_Mapper/map.aspx);
- Areas identified as critical habitat for federally or state listed estuarine and marine species;
- Areas identified as important habitat for marine mammals and turtles;
- Areas identified as important nursery habitats;
- Watersheds or other areas under special management by state coastal management programs;
- Other important commercial or recreational fish habitat; and
- Habitat supporting native bivalve shellfish and associated species.

Project Evaluation and Selection

Together, NOAA and TNC select projects that will receive support from this innovative national partnership. This selection process will take place in two steps. In the first step, TNC's Global Marine Team performs a preliminary review and narrows the project proposals submitted to those that most closely meet the qualifications and evaluation criteria. In the second step, NOAA Headquarters, the NOAA regional staff, and TNC will then review, evaluate, and select final projects with the goal of funding 8-12 projects.

Reporting Requirements for Selected Proposals

After the selection process, the Grantees that are awarded funding shall be required to file quarterly financial reports (for projects managed external to TNC), semi-annual progress reports, and a comprehensive final report. An initial and final fact sheet will also be required with the first progress report and final report for posting on TNC's web site (see: <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/marine/strategies/community.html>).

Following selection

Monitoring:

Applicants will be required to complete a 'Restoration Performance Monitoring and Evaluation' plan with parameters based on the NOAA restoration monitoring guidelines (see: <http://www.era.noaa.gov/information/monitor.html>). For each selected

parameter (minimum of two), a baseline value, reference value, and a proposed target value must be identified prior to the implementation of restoration efforts. The Conservancy and NOAA will work together with the grantee to determine monitoring parameters and targets for successful applicants.

In addition to biological parameters, proposals may include relevant socio-economic monitoring in the work plan to quantify societal benefits derived from the restoration.

Applicant's Permit Requirements

Applicants must provide where relevant a list and status (obtained, application filed, when anticipate obtaining approval, or have not applied) of all necessary federal, state, tribal and local permits required to complete the project and the appropriate regulatory agency contact (name, title, phone) for each permitting agency. TNC will require copies of permit and compliance documentation once the documentation is secured.

Applicants will be required to meet all local, state and tribal environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements before project implementation.

National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

All proposals will be reviewed by NOAA regarding National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. All projects must comply with NEPA before TNC will release funds. For more information on NEPA, please visit NOAA's website at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>.

Applicants will be required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, the presence of historic structures, and impacts to coral reef systems) in order for NOAA to make a NEPA determination on each proposal. For additional information on the NOAA Restoration Center NEPA process, please visit: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/partners/granteeresources.html>

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal.

Once awards are approved we will also need to ensure that, for projects involving volunteers, each project manager has a management plan for them (e.g., liability waivers & procedures for conveying safety information to volunteers prior to conducting field work).

SCUBA Safety

For any Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) diving activities described in the proposal, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that SCUBA divers are certified to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any SCUBA diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of SCUBA diving being undertaken.

Due Diligence

Non-profit applicants external to TNC will be asked to provide copies of documents to ensure that the Awardee meets the criteria of a non-profit conservation organization and that the Awardee meets appropriate standards of capacity, competence, and financial accountability. These documents include but are not limited to the following: a certificate of good standing, a list of the names of all of its board members and principal officers, copies of Awardee's bylaws and articles of incorporation and financial statements. Awardee agrees to notify TNC immediately of any change in Awardee's corporate or tax status or operations, or if any official judicial, legislative, or administrative proceeding is instituted against Awardee that may affect the commitments and obligations agreed to in the award.

Appendix I

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Appendix II

TNC State and Regional Contacts

URL is provided where online reports provide initial guidance on TNC's priority conservation areas

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Some marine and many freshwater priority conservation areas (Portfolio Sites) are indicated at:- <http://maps.tnc.org/coredata>

APPENDIX III

PROJECTED BUDGET TEMPLATE COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

BUDGET CATEGORIES	REQUESTED NOAA FUNDS	APPLICANT MATCH**	THIRD PARTY MATCH**	TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	DESCRIPTION (elaborate in narrative)
Salaries					
Fringe Benefits					
Travel					
Supplies					
Contractual					
Other: (Specify)*					
Other: (Specify)					
Other: (Specify)					
Total Direct Costs					
Indirect Costs (see note 3 below)					
TOTAL*					

* Equipment purchases over \$5,000 per item are not allowable under this RFP.

** Please indicate whether confirmed or pending.

NARRATIVE. Provide detail (by budget category) on how the funds requested, or provided as match, will be used to meet the goals of this project. Please include the following:

- 1) Specify where possible the sources of confirmed match or potential sources of match.
- 2) Please identify Fringe Benefits rates used in Narrative.
- 3) This RFP allows for reimbursement of up to 23.13% in indirect costs. To recover indirect costs under this RFP, the organization must have an indirect cost recovery rate that is based upon either a) a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the U.S. government or b) a documented methodology for recovering indirect costs.

APPENDIX IV

DEFINITION OF RESTORATION & REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITIES

TNC's definition of "restoration" closely mirrors that published by the National Research Council in their book on Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems:

"Restoration is defined as the return of an ecosystem to a close approximation of its condition prior to disturbance. In restoration, ecological damage to the resource is repaired. Both the structure and the functions of the ecosystem are recreated. Merely recreating the form without the functions, or the functions in an artificial configuration bearing little resemblance to a natural resource, does not constitute restoration. The goal is to emulate a natural, functioning, self-regulating system that is integrated with the ecological landscape in which it occurs. Often, natural resource restoration requires one or more of the following processes: reconstruction of antecedent physical hydrologic and morphologic conditions; chemical cleanup or adjustment of the environment; and biological manipulation, including revegetation and the reintroduction of absent or currently nonviable native species."

An illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of possible restoration activities to be funded under this national partnership might include:

- Restoring marsh, wetland, seagrass, or riparian communities through revegetation, invasive plant control, natural recontouring of the landscape, removing levees and artificial drainage systems, and related activities.
- Restoring natural shellfish reefs and beds in estuarine areas through introducing appropriate substrate for shellfish settlement and growth, creating adult spawner sanctuaries and/or seeding juvenile shellfish.
- Restoring habitat through re-introduction or enhancement of native populations of aquatic organisms and control of invasive plant and animal species.
- Working with landowners or managers to restore water clarity, quality, and natural flow of fresh and saltwater.
- Working with water managers to restore natural volumes and timing of freshwater flows through rivers and into estuarine and coastal areas, and to remove or reduce the impacts of barriers to the movement of aquatic organisms in rivers and estuaries.